LAHOMA

By JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

CHAPTER X.
A Sure Enough Man.

WILFRED cast a longing glance toward the cabin, and again he thought Lahoma's parlor door quivered. He even stopped in the path, but Willock went on, unconscious, and he was obliged to follow.

"It's a strange thing," remarked Brick. "Come in, pard. This used to be Lahoma's boudoir before we built that cabin for her," said Willock. "See the carpet? Don't tell me you're a-walking on it and not noticing! See that little stove? I brung it clear across the mountains from a deserted wagon when I was young. Set on this bench. I recollect as well as if it 'us yesterday, Lahoma a-setting there with her legs untouching of the floor, learning 'A' and 'B' and asking thousands of questions and getting herself civilized. I couldn't do a finished job, but Bill took her by the hand later, then a Mrs. Featherby, what moved over in the west mountain, added stories from New England and travels in Europe. When the settlers come she gleaned all they knowed, always a-rising and a-looking out for new country. That's a wonderful girl!" he added with conviction.

When Bill came Wilfred told of his experiences on his quarter section. How he had broken the prairie land, put in his crops, watched them wither away in the terrible dry months, roughed it through the winters, tried again, rought through another drought, staked all on the next spring's planting, raised a half crop, paid off his chattel mortgage, tried again—succeeded.

"I've stayed right with it," he said gravely. "Of course, they required me to stay on the land only during certain months every year. But I stayed with it all the time, and I studied it, and when I failed, as I did year after year, I failed each time in a different way because I learned my lesson. And when I'd walled off the cause of each failure one by one, seemed like there opened before me a broad, clear way that led right into the goal I'd been seeking from the first day. Then I closed out all my deals and looked and saw that everything was trim and ready for winter—and got my horse and started for Greer country."

"And glad we are!" cried Bill Atkins. "I hope you can stay a long time."

"That depends—Lahoma is well, I suppose?"

"The picture of health—when she left," Brick declared admiringly, "and the prettiest little gal this side of the angels. And when you get down sick as I done once from causes incidental to being made of flesh and blood, and she come and laid her hand on my burning forehead, her touch always made me think of an angel's wing."

"Lahoma's not here?" Wilfred asked anxiously.

"Not now, nor for some time," answered Brick.

"I reckon, Wilfred, you just traveled here to take a look at the country where you used to herd cattle?" questioned Brick.

"That wasn't my reason. Principally I wanted to see Lahoma and incidentally my brother."

"Your brother? He ain't in these parts, is he?"

"No," ruefully, "but I expected him to be. When I left home to turn cowpuncher I didn't tell anybody where I'd gone, but just before I left for Oklahoma to turn farmer I wrote to my brother. And about a month ago, seeing things clearing up before me, I asked him to meet me here at Tent City. He's interested in new towns; he's employed by a rich man to plant hardware stores, and I thought he might find an opening here. He came on and was here several weeks with a party of sightseers from Chicago, but he left with them about a week ago."

Willock sat suddenly erect. "Couldn't have been that Sellimer crowd, I reckon, from Chicago?"

"Yes; Mrs. Sellimer and her daughter and some of their friends."

Willock whistled loudly. "And that up and down looking chap in the gold nose glasses was your brother?"

"Never thought of that," Bill exclaimed; "although he had your name, he looked so different. But now that you've laid aside your cowboy rigging I guess you could sit in his class down at the bottom of it."

Willock was uneasy. "I was told," he observed, "and I took the trouble to get datty on the subject, that them Sellimers—the mother and daughter and the herd they drift with—is of the highest pedigree Chicago can produce. It sort of jolts me to find out that anybody we know is kin to the bunch."

Wilfred laughed without bitterness. "Don't let my kinship to Brother Edgerton disturb your ideal. We're so different that we parted without saying goodby. Miss Sellimer is the girl whose letters I was carrying about with me when I first saw you. She refused me because I was as poor as herself. So you see the whole bunch is out of my class."

Wilfred moved uneasily. "Has Lahoma made their acquaintance, then?"

"It looks like it, don't it?"

"What looks like it?" Wilfred asked with sudden sharpness.

"Why, her going off with 'em to spend the winter in high life."

"But I thought—but I came here to see Lahoma!" cried Wilfred, unable to conceal his disappointment. "I have a good farm now not very far from Oklahoma City, and—well, being alone there year after year, a fellow gets to imagining a great many things"— He stopped abruptly.

"That's so," Willock agreed sympathetically. "I ain't a-saying that if Lahoma 'd been like me and Bill she mightn't of liked farming with you first class. But she was born as an associate of high men and women, not cows and chickens. It's the big world for her, and that's where she's gone."

There was silence, broken presently by Bill. "I'm glad you've come, sure!"

Presently the door opened, and the Indian chief Red Feather glided into the apartment with a grunt of salutation. He spread his blanket in a corner and sat down, turning a stolid face to the fire.

"Don't pay no attention to him," remarked Willock, as if speaking of some wild animal. "He comes once a year to see us, and he isn't troublesome if you feeds and sleeps him and don't try to lay your hand on him."

Bill Atkins rose. "But I always light up when he comes," he remarked, reaching stiffly for a lantern. "Are you hungry, Wilfred?" he asked.

Wilfred declared that he was not in the least hungry.

"I'm afraid you're disappointed, son," observed Willock, filling his pipe anew.

Wilfred turned to him with a frank smile. "Brick—it's just awful! It's what comes from depending on something you've no right to consider a sure thing. I never thought of this cove without Lahoma in it. How did she get acquainted with Annabel—and with my brother?"

"It come about, son. I see at once that the bunch of 'em was from the big world. I come home and told Bill, 'Them's the people to tow Lahoma out into life,' says I. So they invited her to spend the winter with them, the Sellimers did, and show her city doings."

"Yes, but how did it come about?"

"Nothing more natural. I goes over to their tent and I tells them of the curiosities and good points of these mountains and gets 'em to come on a sort of picnic to explore. So here they comes, and they gets scattered, what with Bill and Lahoma and me taking different ways. They liked Lahoma first time they see her, as a matter of course. And so that Miss Sellimer she gets separated from all the rest, and I shows her a dandy hiding place where nobody couldn't find her, and I shows her what a good joke it would be to pretend to be lost. So I leaves her there to go to tell her crowd she dares 'em to find her. Are you listening?"

"Of course."

"Well, while she was setting there waiting to be searched for of a sudden a great big Injun in a blanket and feathers and red paint jumps down beside her and grabs her and picks her up, and about as quick as she knew anything she was gagged and bound and being bore along through the air. I reckon it was a terrible moment for her. Now, there is a crevice in the top of the mountain that nobody don't never explore because it's just a crack in the rock that ain't to be climbed out of without a ladder. So the Injun carries her there and lets her down with a rope that it seems he must of had handy somewhere, and he puts out, and there she is in a holler in the mountain, not able to move or cry out no more than if she'd been captured by a regular highwayman."

Wilfred stared at Willock in complete bewilderment. Willock chuckled.

"There was a terrible time," remarked Bill.

"Dark was a-coming on before the party got plumb scared," Willock continued, "but they brushed and combed that mountain looking for the poor lost lady, and as I tells 'em she's a-hiding a-purpose they think it a pore sort of joke till midnight catches 'em mighty serious. It must of been awful for pore Miss Sellimer, all bound and gagged in that horrible way, but it takes heroic treatment to get some cures, and so Lahoma went with 'em to spend the winter."

"But the Indian"—

"Needn't think about him no more, son; we got no more use for that Injun. Well, on the next day Lahoma is looking everywhere, being urged on by me, and, lo and behold, when she comes to that crevice—looked like she couldn't be induced to go there of her own will, but it was brung about finally—what does she see but a tomahawk lying right at the edge what must have been dropped there recent or the crowd would have saw it the day before. It come to her that Miss Sellimer is a prisoner down below. She looks, but it's too dark to see nothing. Not telling nobody for fear of starting up false hopes, she gets a light and lowers it—and there is that miserable young woman, bound and gagged and her pretty dress all tore. Lahoma jumps to her feet to raise the cry, when she discovers a ladder under a bowlder which the Injun must have put there meaning to descend to his victim when the coast was clear. Down she skins and frees Miss Sellimer, who's half dead, pore young lady! Lahoma comes up the ladder and meets me, and I carries her out just like a feather. Well, can't you imagine the rest? I reckon if Miss Sellimer lives a thousand years she'll never forget the awfulness of that big Injun and the angel sweetness of the little gal that saved her. Why, if Lahoma had asked for the rings off her fingers she could have had 'em."

Wilfred rose and went to stare at the darkness from the small square window. Not a word was spoken for some time. At last the silence was broken by the Indian—"Ugh!" grunted Red Feather.

"Just so!" remarked Wilfred, with exceeding dryness.

"What are you thinking, Wilfred?" demanded Brick Willock.

"I'd have thought Lahoma would recognize the ladder."

"So she done, but couldn't the Injun have stole my ladder and carried it to that bowlder? Just as soon as Miss Sellimer was well enough to travel, nothing couldn't hold her in these parts, and that's why your brother had to leave before seeing you—he's setting to Miss Sellimer, and if Lahoma don't git him away from her I reckon he's a goner!"

Bill Atkins spoke vaguely. "It was'nt none of my doings."

Wilfred looked steadily at Willock. "What about your whiskers?"

"Oh, as to them, it was like old times. You takes a cloth and cuts it out—painted red. Pshaw! What are we talking of? Bill, let's show him her letter. What do you say?"

"I reckon it wouldn't hurt," Bill conceded. "Who'll read it?"

"Let Wilfred do the deed," Willock suggested.

Wilfred drew the only stool in the room up beside the lantern, and Bill and Brick disposed themselves on the bench. Red Feather, his beady eyes fastened on the young man's face, sat gracefully erect, apparently alert to all that was going on.

(To be Continued.)

AMERICA EASY PREY FOR INVADING FORCES

(Continued from Page Two)

tation. Not a poorly trained or a deficiently equipped soldier should be permitted among them. They should, in every way, be models for the other classes of soldiers. As the regulars are, the reserves are likely to be. The American people should be ashamed if they permit any social distinction that degrades our soldiers. Their uniforms should be badges of honor, not liveries of shame. Entrance to our army should be hailed as a high privilege and not as the sullen performance of an unwilling duty.

The specifications for our national reserves should demand young men of strong bodies, of common sense, and of at least a common school education, as well as the possession of soldierly traits of character. Their training should be rigid, thorough and complete, and their salaries and subsistence such as to invite the enlistment of the very best material. When they return to private life, their drills, practice, sanitation, and marksmanship should be followed up with the very greatest care, and their training, instead of being allowed to decrease, should be constantly improved, and there should also be provided for them regularly such a course of intellectual study as is calculated to discipline and cultivate their minds in matters of true military and patriotic concern.

Too great stress cannot be laid upon the enrollment, training, and equipment for military service of the young men of our schools, colleges, universities, and other civil bodies, for here we have not only the physical qualifications of the soldier, but high class mental training as well, and this is always coupled with true patriotism and high devotion to duty. I believe this to be one of the most promising sources from which we may obtain good soldiers for the defense of our country in the future. In England today Oxford and Cambridge universities are practically deserted, their students being on the continent battling heroically for their country. At our own doors, at Bingham school, under that fine master, Colonel Robert Bingham, and that keen army instructor, Captain O. F. Snyder, we have a striking illustration of what military training in our schools can do for young men. Here we have a fine body of young fellows, with erect form, sound bodies, martial bearing, and trained discipline, and every one of them who has entered the military service of his country has performed his duty with marked ability and honorable distinction. In addition to preparation for the defense of their country, such training of our young men is to them an invaluable **physical and social asset.** This is especially true in an age when we have certain tendencies to effeminacy and weakness, at a time when the average young man eats too much, wears too much, sees too much, and sleeps too little. There should be some provision, either by the nation or by the state, or by both, by which our high school boys should have at least training in the rudiments of military tactics, as they do in Switzerland and Australia today, and no boy should be permitted to attain the age of twenty-one without owning, and knowing how to shoot, a good rifle, and in his education sound discipline, manly courage, strict punctuality, high devotion to duty and patriotic love of country should be deeply instilled.

National Guard.

Our national guard, or the organized militia of the several states, although it has never received from either the nation or the states the support to which it is justly entitled, has, nevertheless, a splendid history, has often covered itself with glory and is capable of vast and useful military service. Instead of consisting of only 127,410, including officers and men, as it does today, it should be raised to 300,000 men, its standards should be improved, its men should be better paid, its training should be made more thorough and its constitutional functions should be more clearly and definitely defined. Considering the small cost of its upkeep, in connection with its splendid achievements, it is entitled to the very highest praise.

Although it is not my purpose to speak of our navy at this time, I, nevertheless, take the liberty of observing that it should be raised to a fighting force of at least fifty high-class battleships, with all the necessary subordinate and auxiliary craft; that all of its parts and equipments should be thoroughly coordinated and brought up to date; that every ship should be fully officered and manned; and that it should, withal, be brought to a rank among the navies of the world second only to that of Great Britain. This, of course cannot be done at once, but it should be the goal for which we strive.

But you say all this will cost something. Certainly it will. And it should. It will be worth something. But when we are about to spend money for necessary national defense, we should no more stand back on expense than when we go to buy food and clothes for our children, or to employ a doctor, to treat our family, or to procure any other actual necessary of life which we must have whether it comes high or comes low. It is a case where expense is not a consideration. Adequate preparation for defence would be cheap at any price. I have no love for the man who is unwilling to fight for his country, or to contribute to its necessary defense, and I can scarcely trust myself to describe him. He neither loves his country nor possesses the finer traits of the soul. But as a matter of fact, the cost of the additional defences which I advocate would entail no very large expenditure. A very considerable part of the overhead expense of this increase is already met, since no additional physical or housing plants, or administrative forces, would be necessary, leaving only the items of food, clothing and pay to be provided for. A large saving could be effected by cutting out a number of our needless army posts, some of which owe their existence not to the demands of the service but to the pork barrel proclivities of politicians more ambitious than patriotic.

And now, anticipating the cry of "militarism," let me say that the little nucleus of a standing army of 150,000 men, which I propose, is only one-sixth of the standing peace army of Germany, although she is only one-seventeenth of our size and has but three-fifths of our population; is only one-fifth of that of France, with only one-seventeenth of our size and but one-third of our population; is but one-fourth that of Austria-Hungary, with but one-fifteenth of our size and one-half of our population; is only one-tenth of that of Russia with twice our area and one and a half times our population; is but one-half that of Great Britain (exclusive of her colonies), with but one-half of our population. There can never be any "militarism" in this country. Whoever raises the cry either does not know what he says or does not care. In either case, he is to be pitied. Our military and our civil affairs are as completely separated as are our church and state. We are not in the least danger of military dominancy. Our only danger is that we shall never be able to arouse the necessary military spirit to insure our safety and protection.

My earnest hope is that every American citizen, unbiased by party interest, and unswayed by personal prejudice, may become, seriously interested in the preparation of his country for its honorable defense, lest these shores of ours be some day trodden by foreign foes and this glorious heritage of ours become the possession of alien enemies. Let us not forget that a few months ago there was a nation called Luxemburgh, but it was not prepared to defend itself and it has now passed off the map of the world forever; that Belgium, noble little Belgium, though she is fighting for her life as men have scarcely fought since the world began, is not quite equal to her self-defense, and that she is now probably in the last throes of a slowly expiring nation; that China is, and has ever been, powerless to defend herself, and that step by step, the armies of her enemies occupy her lands and move nearer toward her sacred cities. Surely we shall not permit it to be so where man has made his best and most intelligent attempt at self-government.

LAYING A FOUNDATION

Little Bobby (the guest) — Mrs. Skimper, when I heard we were goin' to have dinner at your house I started right in trainin' for it.

Mrs. Skimper (the hostess)—By saving up your appetite, Bobby?

Little Bobby—No'm. By eatin' a square meal first.

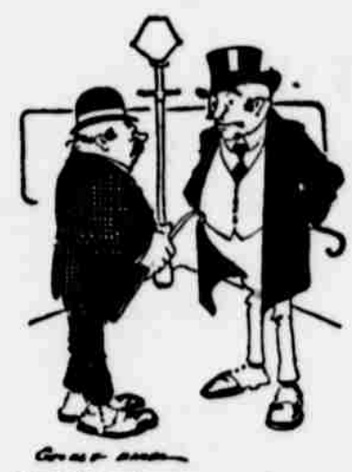
HER NEW COOK

"I have a cook now that took a college course in domestic science last summer."

"You seem enthusiastic, Mabel."

"Yes; I find we belong to the same secret society."

WHAT HE MEANT



Mr. Tellitt—A woman can dress well on a sum that would keep a man looking shabby.

Mr. Dottt—That's right. The sum my wife dresses on keeps me shabby all year 'round.

MAUDIE SURE IS

Arthur—Are they classy people.

Evelyn—My, yes. Maud goes out with a young man who wears an aviation costume.

OVERLOOKED

"Wot you readin', Willy?"

"The sassiety news; an' dere ain't a word about my engagement yet!"

HIDDEN HOUSE

By CLARISSA MACKIE.

"Remember, Jack, the man has been in prison for twenty years—once he was a great politician, a rich man, respected by all—but he was found out in a big steal. He's done time and now he is out. What is he going to do with the rest of his life? Bring me the story—and you'll get yours, see?" The chief smiled and Jack hustled away to catch the first train for a remote Long Island village, where it was said Roberts was in hiding.

At Sandyways Jack guardedly questioned the host of the solitary hotel. He reasoned that Lawson Roberts would seek sanctuary under an assumed name.

"Many strangers in town?" repeated the hotel man, thoughtfully nibbling a toothpick. "Can't say as there are—all the boarders have gone. I reckon you're an agent of some kind—maybe selling books?"

Jack smiled evasively.

"I'll bet there's one old party you couldn't sell a book to—not if you was to take off 90 per cent of the price," went on the man.

"Who is he?"

"Name's Robinson—taken the old Hidden house—used to be Judge Hidden's place. Celia Hidden married Lawson Roberts, the politician; he's in prison now for crooked dealing. His wife died ten years ago and the place belongs to the daughter. It's never been rented until recently, when Mrs. Hester Bird rented it. No one ever heard of her before; and now her brother, old man Robinson, and his daughter have arrived. And they're all as close-mouthed and uppish as can be; as if Sandyways folks weren't good enough for them. And stingy—whew!"

"Well, you're not very encouraging," responded Jack with a bored air as he moved away. But when he was out of sight his pace quickened. The first urchin he met directed him to Hidden house on the outskirts of the village.

He approached the side entrance to the gloomy old house, passing a small, rustic summerhouse smothered in woodbine.

"Halt!" said a determined voice.

Jack halted to confront a wicked looking shotgun leveled by a sweet-faced, wide-eyed girl boyishly attired in a short khaki skirt and blouse, with high-laced tan boots on her pretty feet.

His hat came off and his look of inquiry was mingled with sincere admiration.

"Perhaps you didn't observe the 'No Trespassing' signs," she remarked coolly.

"I didn't," he honestly confessed.

"They are plainly to be seen," she said significantly. "You can read them as you pass out."

"Thank you—but I want to see some one."

"Who are you looking for?" she asked sharply.

"Mr.—Roberts," he hazarded.

Her face paled and a desperate look came into the sweet eyes that should never have been troubled by sorrow.

"You mean Mr. Robinson?" she asked.

"I mean Lawson Roberts," he said, feeling like a brute.

The gun dropped suddenly as if her strength had failed her.

"I might have known it! You want to interview him, I suppose? He has paid the price of his sin—let him alone!" she cried passionately.

"My—my paper—" he stammered, abashed at her emotion.

"Your paper!" she mimicked. "What is it to your paper what my father does now that justice has been satisfied? No one would listen to him when he protested his innocence in those old days." How scornfully she looked at him!

"Hardly that," he said brusquely. He looked sharply down the path. The bent form of a man was hobbling painfully down the walk.

"He is like a child," she said tremulously. "He has been shut away from the world so long, and now everything is strange to him. I will not have him hounded by curiosity seekers! I will kill the first man who tries to interview him!" She ended in a fierce outburst that was strangely unlike her gentle personality.

"I will go, Miss Roberts," he said slowly. "Some day I'm coming back again, not as a reporter to interview your father, but as a friend to help prove his innocence!"

"Ah, thank you—but stay now and hear his story of the guilty man," she cried eagerly.

He shook his head. "I must throw up my present job before I can tackle another one," he smiled and went away.

Afterward, when a great criminal lawyer took up the Roberts case and proved the innocence of the old man, all credit was given to Jack Shirley for his strenuous efforts in the case, and when Jack married Celia Roberts people said he had his great reward.

The editor of the Chronicle muttered maledictions on womankind in general and pretty girls in particular.

"I wondered what queered that Roberts assignment," he frowned. "It was the girl in the case!"

The Idea.

"What's a philanthropist, pa?"

"He's a variety of things, my son, but oftenest he's a man who robs Peter of his savings to pay Paul's rent."